DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 412 906 IR 018 555

AUTHOR Truelson, Judith A.
TITLE Transforming the Web into a Forum for Academic Research: The USC Doheny Electronic Resources Center Model.
PUB DATE 1997-00-00
NOTE 7p.; Paper presented at "The Universe at Your Fingertips: Continuing Web Education." Conference Sponsored by the Librarians Association of the University of California, Santa Barbara, Friends of the UCSB Library, and the Black Gold Cooperative Library System Reference Committee (Santa Barbara, CA, April 25, 1997). For papers from the proceedings of this conference, downloaded and printed out from the UCSB Web site, see IR 018 545-561.
AVAILABLE FROM Electronic version: http://www.library.ucsb.edu/universe/truelson.html
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Libraries; Access to Information; *Computer Centers; Computer Networks; Computer Uses in Education; *Curriculum Enrichment; Faculty; Futures (of Society); Higher Education; Information Dissemination; Information Networks; Internet; *Librarian Teacher Cooperation; Librarians; Microcomputers; *Multimedia Materials; Online Systems; *Research Needs; Research Tools; Users (Information); *World Wide Web
IDENTIFIERS *University of Southern California

ABSTRACT

Evidence suggests that use of multimedia or new media can enhance selected areas of the curriculum. Library planners at the University of Southern California (USC) believe that use of multimedia to transform the World Wide Web into a research forum for scholars in the humanities facilitates and even ensures the eventual use of this material in the curriculum. This use also affords researchers a more flexible and accessible research forum. The USC Doheny Electronic Resources Center was established in September 1996 to foster a collaborative environment between researchers and librarians in creating and disseminating electronically based multimedia research resources. The center serves as a key multimedia, electronic research resource for the Humanities and Social Sciences divisions of the College of Letters, Arts, and Sciences, the Annenberg School of Communication, and the School of Theater. This paper describes the center, its goals and objectives, equipment, review and proposal criteria for center projects, and a brief description of its first five projects. Successes and challenges, and a forecast of future projections for the center are described. The value added role for the librarian of the future will be location, filtering, and customization of multimedia information, and re-education of the faculty. (SWC)

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Transforming the Web into a Forum for Academic Research: The USC Doheny Electronic Resources Center Model

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Judith A. Truelson
Director, Doheny Electronic Resources Center
University of Southern California

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Abstract

Evidence suggests that use of multimedia or new media can enhance selected areas of the curriculum. Library planners at USC believe that use of multimedia to transform the WEB into a research forum for scholars in the humanities facilitates and even ensures the eventual use of this material in the curriculum. This use also affords researchers a more flexible and accessible research forum, albeit a forum that may present some intellectual property challenges. The USC Doheny Electronic Resources Center was established in September of 1996 to foster a collaborative environment between researchers and librarians in creating and disseminating electronically based multimedia research resources. The purpose of this paper is to describe the centerwith librarians and humanities faculty, and its first five projects -- including a SGML Project to develop expertise among library faculty and humanities faculty in use of SGML Author for Windows 95 which is the standard format prescribed by the Text Encoding Initiative; and, a Dead Sea Scrolls Project which will provide WEB access to the largest known catalog of archaeological images for scholars and students of ancient Near Eastern and biblical texts with the ability to order high resolution copies of these images off the WEB. In the course of the discussion both successes and challenges (particularly ways in which obstacles have been circumvented) will be emphasized, as well as a forecast of future developments.

Introduction

Tremendous changes have been occurring on academic campuses that influence scholars communication patterns and the entire scholarly research process. In fact, humanities

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disciplines are becoming increasingly computer dependent. Although we are still in the earliest stage of building any universal electronic library, the initiation of this process raises many issues that libraries must address if they are to continue to play a vital role in serving humanists.

Within the academic institution as a whole, three models have emerged which shed light on how humanities technology might be addressed by libraries.: the humanities computing center, the electronic text center and the multimedia center (Ellis 1996). The humanities computing center has provided a context for individuals seeking to explore the integration of computers and texts, while the electronic text centers have found support under the administrations of both libraries and academic computing centers, and sometimes within academic departments such as English. The multimedia center, in which all subject categories are grouped under the format heading of multimedia, represents a possible alternative to the electronic text or humanities computing center.

In creating the Doheny Electronic Resources Center at USC, library administration made the decision to merge the two models of electronic text and multimedia to maximize the integration of multimedia into humanities research since scholarly exchange is taking place at all levels of the USC network and complex behaviors drive scholars in seeking multimedia information resources. As a result, a more democratic and freer research environment has been created, characterized by democratization of access and freedom of examination . The technological evolution on campus along with the three-way partnership among the library, the computing center, and the faculty, offers new potential for creating university publishing enterprises.

Development of the Doheny Electronic Resources Center

The USC Doheny Electronic Resources Center, located in the Reference Center, was formally launch in September 1996 when I was appointed as its first director. The center serves as a key multimedia, electronic research resource for the Humanities and Social Sciences divisions of the College of Letters, Arts, and Sciences, the Annenberg School of Communication, and the School of Theater. The mission of the Doheny Electronic Resources Center is to foster a collaborative environment between researchers and librarians in creating and disseminating electronically based multimedia research resources. Specific goals of the center include:

- creation of a new user community
- facilitation of a new level of computing in the humanities
- support of new working (research) methods
- offer of new teaching possibilities

The objectives evolving from these goals include:

- offer of training to humanities faculty on new types of equipment and software
- manipulation of etexts
- creation of etexts
- promotion of a high degree of bibliographic awareness.

At its inception, the center offered its user community the following:

- Equipment
  - Power Mac 8500/120
    48 MB AM
    1.6 GB hard drive
  - Hewlett Packard Scanner
    attached to the Power Mac
  - gigabite peripheral external Iomega JAZ drive
  - PC Pentium 133
    32MB RAM memory
    1.5 GB hard drive
- MAC Software
  - Adobe Acrobat
  - Adobe PageMaker 6.0
  - Microsoft Office 4.2.1
  - Netscape 3.0
  - WordPerfect 3.5
- PC Software
  - Adobe Acrobat
  - Adobe Photoshop
  - Microsoft Office for Windows 95 with Word 7, Excel 7, PowerPoint 7, Schedule+
  - HP Deskscan II
  - PaperPort
  - Netscape Navigator 3.0
  - Microsoft FrontPage

Center Projects

Center projects for the Doheny Electronic Resources Center have been reviewed in relation to a range of criteria including:

- consistency with ERC's mission
- consistency with USC's strategic plan
- technical feasibility of the project (i.e. hardware and software capability to do what is needed for the project)
- administrative feasibility (i.e., availability of personnel and equipment for the project; realistic timetable for the project; potential for
- collaboration with other library units, if need be, to complete the project
- significance of the project (particularly research significance and/or significance to library archival research)
- likelihood of attracting grant support)

Although there is no standard form, applicants should include the following information in their proposal:

1. Name, School/Department, and rank
2. Project title
3. Short description of project
4. General timetable of work to be performed

5. Brief assessment of what resources are needed to complete the project
6. Indication of available budget
7. Purpose of project (i.e., disposition of the finished project--indication of accessibility of finished project to the USC community or beyond).

Five projects are now underway in the center:

- **Edward Bond**--involving creation of a website with unique primary data drawn from Edward Bond's handwritten notebooks and letters which will be an unique and valuable resource to researchers of contemporary English drama; may also involve some transcription of handwritten material with subsequent application of a search engine to the website.
- **Religious Institutions in LA**--involving provision of search engine access with a website to fulltext primary research data on over 400 religious institutions in Los Angeles
- **SGML**--involving development of expertise among library faculty and humanities faculty in use of SGML, particularly use of the SGML Author for Windows 95; Reference Center faculty will subsequently offer training sessions on use of this software which is the standard format prescribed by the Text Encoding Initiative.
- **Dead Sea Scrolls**--involving creation of a two-part website to serve the interests of scholars and students of ancient Near Eastern and biblical texts--one part, "the Scholars Site," the other part, "the Educational Site." To investigate the best means for direct access to large image files through the Scholar's Site
- **Hamlin Garland**--involving creation of a website with unique primary data drawn from Hamlin Garland's handwritten manuscripts which will be an unique and valuable resource to researchers of American literature; may also involve some transcription of handwritten material with subsequent application of a search engine to the website.

Successes and Challenges

Librarian-humanities faculty collaboration in electronic text creation and the ascendance of bibliographic code as a counterpart to linguistic code are key successes in this multimedia approach to electronic text Now not only can the computer record textual variants and accidentals; it can empower the editor to record layout, physical appearance, and printing history--the stuff from which social history is formed (Litz in Finneran 1996).

The challenges experienced in the center have much to do with difficulty in reaching and interesting faculty in joint projects. It has been discouraging to learn that less than 50 percent of USC's humanities faculty come to the library on a regular basis. Some faculty contacted with respect to potential center projects have expressed resistance to change and fear of the new technology.

Future Projections

A pioneer of electronic scholarship has noted that:

> what we can observe so far suggests that the assimilation of the computer is following which I take to be a common path for a new technology: First, in

> the imitative phase, it tends to be used as if it were merely an improvement upon and replacement for what is already known; then, after some time, we begin to see it as genuinely new, and to realize that its newness alters how we think about the world (McCarty 1993).

The value added role for the librarian of the future in this context will be location, filtering and customization of multimedia information and reeducation of the faculty. Electronic text and multimedia librarians will need to rely on colleagues both inside and outside the library in order to move this agenda forward. Since little work has been done on most campuses to inform faculty about the potential value of multimedia as a research venue, it would be necessary to put together a larger network of colleagues from many departments who would express enthusiasm for electronic text and actively use it in their research and teaching; explain the value of multimedia and humanities-based technology to a large group of potential users; and, develope a physical space in order to demonstrate and explore the various uses of electronic text in the electronic and multimedia text center .

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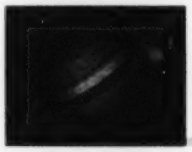

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